

Five Important Ways to Help a Child with ADHD Get Ready for School

Mary Solanto, Ph.D.
Director, ADHD Center
www.mssm.edu/psychiatry/adhd

1. **Get Organized!**
 - a. Kids with ADHD need help keeping their materials organized. Helpful supplies may include
 - i. Loose-leaf Binders with sections for different subjects
 - ii. Folders of different colors for different subjects
 - iii. Large Dry-Erase calendar to be mounted over the desk to keep track of assignment due dates, test dates and school events
 - b. Set up the child's personal desk area for homework– far from distractions and with all needed materials (eg. Pens, papers, notebooks) clearly labeled and within easy reach.
2. **Set up the after-school routine and schedule.** Kids with ADHD do best with clear structure – eg. Short period for snack and relaxation after school, followed by a consistent (and non-negotiable!) time to begin homework, dinner, post-homework play, and bedtime. Decide what the schedule will be, communicate and post it.
3. **Meet the new Teacher:** It is important to be proactive in setting up a healthy working relationship with your child's new teacher. Initiate an appointment for a meeting and use this time to communicate your child's strengths and weaknesses, as well as strategies that have and have not worked in the past. Consider with her the use of a "Daily Report Card (DRC)", which lists a few positive target behaviors (eg. "listened attentively"; "completed work sheet on time") with space to give a daily "grade," points, stickers, or happy faces for achievement of the target. The Daily Report Card is signed by the teacher and brought home by the child at the end of each day for review and reinforcement by the parent.
4. **Expect and reinforce the positive:** Communicate to your child that you believe he/she will be successful. Set up a plan of specific reinforcement/rewards to recognize positive effort as well as small daily achievements. This can be tied to the results of the Daily Report Card (eg. Special play-time or treat for achieving a goal on the DRC).
5. **Get them to Bed Early!:** During the summer, kids may have gotten used to staying up late and sleeping in. Help their bodies adjust to school rising and bedtimes, by setting the times earlier each night, beginning a week before school begins. Lack of sufficient sleep impairs attention, concentration, and problem-solving – putting kids with ADHD at greater disadvantage.